DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 057 515 EC 040 682

AUTHOR	Bruch, Catherine B.
TITLE	Parents' Support of Gifted Programs.
INSTITUTION	Georgia Univ., Athens.
SPONS AGENCY	Council for Exceptional Children, Arlington, Va.
PUB DATE	71
NOTE	15p.; Paper presented at the Special Conference on Emerging Models of Special Education for Sparsely Populated Areas (Memphis, Tennessee, December 3, 1971)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Community Role; Educational Programs; *Exceptional Child Education; *Gifted; *Parent Role; Rural Areas; *Rural Education; Rural Schools; Volunteers

ABSTRACT

Problems of schools in rural areas are said to be related to the problems of talent search for the gifted in these areas, and to ways for meeting their needs. If a comprehensive model of special education is used in which the major function is specified as therapy, then the term therapy must include a total community involvement, with therapy viewed as the total impact of education, formal and informal, upon the gifted child. A review is presented of various school and community efforts to provide for the gifted children in small schools and rural areas. Volunteer efforts, especially by parents, are highlighted. (Author)

ED057515

PARENTS' SUPPORT OF GIFTED PROGRAMS

Catherine B. Bruch

University of Georgia

Abstract: Problems of schools in rural areas are related to the problems of talent search for the gifted in these areas, and to ways for meeting their needs. If a comprehensive model of special education is used in which the major function is specified as "therapy", then the term therapy must include a total community involvement, with therapy viewed as the total impact of education, formal and informal, upon the gifted child. A review is presented of various school and community efforts to provide for the gifted children in small schools and rural areas. Volunteer efforts are highlighted.

EC 040 688 E

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

PARENTS' SUPPORT OF GIFTED PROGRAMS

Catherine B. Bruch
University of Georgia

To discuss how volunteers and parents may support gifted programs in rural areas, it is necessary to understand what the problems may be in finding the gifted in those locales, and in providing appropriately for their educational development when they are not readily centered in a single locale. Essential to solution of problems, however, are the parents and the community.

If the paradigm proposed by Kelly (1968) for comprehensive special educational functions is to include the gifted, his postulate that therapy is the major function of special education can be modified. One must assume that, although gifted children do sometimes need therapy in its usual sense, therapy is interpreted as the total impact of appropriate education. Educational processes which fit the needs of gifted children are therapeutic in the fostering of positive growth; those processes which diminish the children's potential achievements are promoting poorer mental health and reduced self-actualization. It is in this sense that the gifted may be included in such a total model for functional special education---all of their education is special. Parents and community resources are needed to work with the schools in providing a total scope of educational opportunities, both formal and informal, for meeting the needs of able children.

Problems of gifted children in rural areas are associated closely with the general problems of children in these environments, and with educators' difficulties in meeting the needs of a variety of children. Rurality may, by its very nature, cause pupils to be "disadvantaged". That is, certain experiences of

an academic nature are more difficult to provide when there are few pupils needing the experience in a particular locale. One review emphasized the higher dropout rate, reduced educational and vocational opportunities, and lowered incentive for college (Edington, 1970).

An over-riding problem in many rural areas is the associated poverty of many children related to a more generalized poverty in the employment opportunities of the area. Thus rural children who are also disadvantaged economically pose a particular problem in that parents cannot easily provide culturally and academically enhancing experiences with the increased difficulty of access to opportunities available in larger cities. While the middle class rural child may be able to travel more frequently to such an enlarged environment for experiencing, he too suffers diminished cultural impact to a degree. In many instances, the educational preparation in the rural school bears no relationship to the realities of training needed for eventual occupational life in a larger town or city. Aspirations for the children of poverty may be delimited to an expectation of continued poverty within the available occupations in the rural area. Teachers and others may fail to recognize the potentials of dormant gifted and talented children from poverty backgrounds.

The initial problem in providing for the gifted, talented, or creative child then becomes that of talent search. Identification of the "standardized" gifted child, usually from a middle class background, is relatively easy for he would be more likely to achieve fairly well on the traditional standardized measurements.

The child who is gifted, creative, or talented from the rural poverty cultures may be more difficult to identify in routine ways, so that a more sophisticated sensitivity to elements of potential abilities, to sparks of complex thinking demonstrated in non-academic tasks, and to talents masked by non-standardized verbal expressions must be developed in teachers, parents, and the community.

The problem is compounded by the fact that there are many different disadvantaged cultures. The cultural values vary within each group, so that teachers need to understand the particular culture-related attitudes which affect the school performances of different children. Parent involvement in education will aid in talent search and retrieval, and in cooperative planning for "relevancy" of educational efforts for the gifted from atypical or disadvantaged cultures. Mitchell and Davison (1970) state that "When we begin to individualize education, when we become talent-retrieval conscious, talent-retrieval will not be confined to students but will include teachers, administrators, and interested citizens." (p. 384) School staff need to develop a special awareness of the different cultures within their communities, the values affecting education, identification of that particular culture's most able children through non-standardized procedures (Torrance, 1970) and through modifications of knowledge based upon standardized measurements (Bruch, 1970a, 1971).

E. Paul Torrance (1970) has developed from his experience and that of others in attention to the positives of disadvantaged children a listing which may serve as an observational identification scheme for those who are gifted, or outstanding, in their cultures. The list is condensed as the following characteristics: slow,cautious, but gifted learners; verbal ability with peers, etc., not in school; likes to learn/dislikes school; enjoys, skillful in games, physical

activities, music; /mutual cooperativeness; avoidance of competitive or individualistic strains; peer reciprocal enjoyment; informality, humor; expressive in feelings; improvises with the ordinary; articulate in role playing, creative activities; capable, enjoys art, creative dramatics, dance, and in group learning and problem solving; expressive speech; non-verbal fluency, flexibility; responsive to the concrete, to the kinesthetic; expressive in gestures, "body language", rich imagery in informal language, brainstorming; originality in problem solving, brainstorming; problem-centered; emotionally responsive; rapid warm-up. If these characteristics are observable "positives" within disadvantaged cultures, they can be utilized both to identify those with outstanding cultural abilities, and to be applied as a basis for culturally meaningful learning activities.

In a review of the use of the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking with the disadvantaged, Torrance (1971) summarized the findings from various researchers who made racial and socioeconomic class comparisons. The general concensus from these findings appears to be that on the whole black children and others categorized as economically disadvantaged do as well as, and in some portions of the test, better than their white or more advantaged counterparts. If any area of relative difficulty be found, it is sometimes that of lessened verbal creativity, but with encouragement and freedom to express themselves, black youngsters more nearly match the performances of advantaged students in verbal creations. Other measures related to creativity, such as the Alpha Biographical Inventory for high school and college students, have been shown to be racially unbiased, and to predict academic success well.

Torrance (1971) too focussed upon the importance of community/school programs built upon the strengths of the disadvantaged when he stated:

> In spite of their creative positives, creatively gifted disadvantaged children must be given a chance to develop their potentialities. To provide this chance, school and community programs have to respect the creative positives of disadvantaged children and build upon them rather than stress compensation for deficits. (p. 79)

Bruch (1970a, 1971) built a cognitive design based upon analysis of the strengths of black disadvantaged elementary students. Curriculum efforts may be effected in which their cognitive strengths are recognized as displays of giftedness. A curriculum built upon these gifts may in turn enhance and stimulate development in areas of difficulty.

But, after some identification has been made of the gifted and potentially gifted children from both advantaged and disadvantaged populations, the next problem becomes that of deciding how best to serve these children. In the readily available literature, very few references have been made specifically to the rural gifted, or the gifted in relatively smaller schools. A search was therefore made for ideas which were either designated as for the rural gifted, or which could be adapted as appropriate for such students. The list which follows is a summary of provisions appropriate for gifted students in small schools and rural areas. (References apply to the immediately preceding ideas within the alphabetical heading.)

Summary of provisions appropriate for gifted students in small schools and rural areas.

A. 1. Handbook for parents stating procedures, goals and philosophy located persons willing to assist with curriculum projects, and guest lecturers, sharing local history realia and other collections, extending regular teacher for enrichment activities.*
2. "Floating period" rotated, with some extended periods each weak for individual study.
3. Learning packages in English, reducing lectures, and permitting teachers to work with individual students, who progress at their own pace.
4. Summer workshops designed uniquely for teachers in small or rural schools.
5. Correspondence courses through universitites to extend course offerings.
6. Seminars for able students through the cooperation of nearby colleges.
7. Special counseling and guidance, including field trips to industries and educational institutions, through use of doctoral students at nearby universities.
8. Sharing of teachers (specialists) between nearby districts, including the use of mobile vans with specialized equipment.
9. Amplified conference telephone calls for special teaching courses, with visuals (slides, transparancies, etc.) available at each small class site. This method permits conversations or discussions with a variety of "experts", in addition to the special course teacher.
10. In extremely remote areas, a different special subject teacher is flown into the area each day of the week. A village teacher's aide remains to coordinate the program and supervise homework.
11. Students with unusual aptitude in a subject tutor others. Able students benefit from acquiring depth in subject in order to make clear explanations, and from understanding of other students. (May be a problem rather than a benefit if the practice is overworked, or if gifted students experience <u>only</u> tutoring as a program, and not also

other challenges).

12. Special programmed instructional units.
13. "Audiobus" equipped with tape-recorded lessons, for listening with headphones during long ride to school* (Heesacker, 1970)

B. 1. Self-paced progress in business courses. The teacher presents material at the average pace, but students progress through self-checking of workbooks at their own pace, so that an able student may accomplish two years in one.
2. Extra, difficult courses available beyond normal load, on a pass-fail basis for grading, so that bright students may either complete high school in a shorter time, or encompass a broader range of courses.
3. Developmental reading, through independent machine study, to improve speed and comprehension of bright students.
4. Improved library resources, including availability of enrichment slides, transparencies, and tape recordings for independent research or study.
5. Flexible modular scheduling; part-time in large groups, part-time in small groups, labs, or independent study.
6. Improvement of staff through released-time for inservice or planning and problem-solving. (Support of superintendent, board, and staff necessary for innovative development.) (Pyner, 1970)

C. 1. Centralization through a regional academic center for the teaching of more specialized academic courses. Staff suggested to be attached to regional vocational centers. (Heldman, 1970)

D. 1. Saturday seminars for about 6% of population, with nearby college as staff.
2. Telelectures with audio-visual materials at each school; a few classes held on college campus; included discussion and group interactions, not only lectures; valuable for interactions with able peers.
3. Summer seminars, financed by school and by students. (Porter, 1970)

E. 1. Lay readers program, in which volunteer readers offered commentary on English themes; volunteers from an educated community (65% college graduates).*
2. Library aides program, with "token" pay for high caliber aides from educated community.*
3. Science-centered reading to motivate underachievers, aided by student teachers and volunteer aides; field trips included in program. (May use other subjects of interest as reading.)* (Malone, 1970)

F. 1. Speech class for advanced students, involving creative experiences in non-print media, elementary research, and activities of social and interpersonal concern. (Mitchell, 1970)

G. 1. Summer group-counseling and instructional programs relating to self understanding, career aspirations, and valuing school directed toward emergence from underachievement.
2. Weekend exploration trips, visiting natura, industrial, and cultural/intellectual resources and associated resource people.*
3. Visits to and comparison of various ecological settings.*

4. Gifted in isolated areas exchange places for a week with peers in urban areas.*
5. Summer school for creative leadership, humanistic-social-science values explorations, interdisciplinary classes, cultural experiences, and week-end tours.
6. Community sponsors program, wherein a gifted adult from the community works with a particular child in a special area of interest.*
7. Program related to a regional center concerned with the needs of the local economy and culture.
8. Resource room and resource teacher.
9. Residential school on a short-term or long-term basis.
10. Small groups of pupils work on different subjects at the same time, within the same classroom, and with the usual teacher.
11. Two-way radios for offering courses to isolated areas.
12. The possibility of advanced placement courses through correspondence.*
13. Consultant-teacher for the gifted, with extensive inservice education program with staff.
14. Correspondence with other gifted children, with such adults, and with a sponsor or mentor, possibly in association with courses by correspondence.*
15. Access to extended learning materials: books, records, laboratory equipment, learning kits, data storage, retrieval, and manipulation devices.*
16. Inservice education for teachers on individualization of instruction. (Plowman, 1968).

H. 1. Television programs designed for transmitting new knowledge and developing the higher thought processes of rural gifted students.
2. Inservice education programs and materials for teachers to aid in the development of television program materials and in the understanding of the educational needs of the gifted. (Dallenbach and DeYoung, 1969).

I. 1. Double-decker busses as mobile laboratories.
2. Summer job experience laboratories.*
3. Science kits using "homemade" experimental equipment. (Appalachain Advance, 1966)
4. Mobile teaching environments, such as science labs: climate-controlled lab for botany; space science - astronomy lab. Arts and cultura lab; music appreciation learning center. Offices for specialists, such as teachers of physical education, music, art, and guidance counselors, etc.
5. Educational television, with programs for school and community education.*
6. Ungraded classes; bright students in elementary school could accomplish skills in 4 of 6 years (then be partially accelerated, or pursue enriched areas during 5-6 years.
7. Foreign language laboratory aides to help in preparing language learning tapes.* (Appalachian Advance, 1967
8. Computer assisted mathematics instruction (for training teachers in "modern math") could be used with bright students.

9. Traveling symphony presentations.
10. Cultural center for teaching pride in the Appalachian Culture, for bright creatives who would probably otherwise drop out.*
11. Educational video-tape programs made by students; also video-tapes made for instant feedback replays and discussions, etc. (Appalachian Advance, 1968).
12. A variety of self-directed activities during unscheduled modules of a modular schedule: quite area; communication-recreation area; non-graded courses; guidance conferences; individual instruction; reading of language labs; use of audio-visual materials, library, etc.*
13. Television programs for preschool children, with follow-up calls by home visitors (persons with some college training; could be trained volunteers.)*
14. Video-taped recordings about different lifestyles, for vocational guidance.
15. A special experiences room with sounds and visuals designed for simulation.
16. Micro-teaching for inservice training of teachers and aides together, with feedback and discussion of videos.
17. Correspondence courses (e.g. from the University of Nebraska) to extend the range of courses available for the academically ambitious or those with diverse interests. (Appalachian Advance, 1969)
18. Mobile classrooms.
19. Upward Bound programs, to motivate the disadvantaged gifted to go to college.
20. High school juniors and seniors trained as teachers' aides.
21. Teacher corps, college interns, and volunteers as aides.*
22. Parent assisted learning (SWRL program).*
23. Inquiry skills program; Instructional concepts program (SWRL).
24. Individualized curriculum in the elementary and secondary; individual instruction for community and junior college faculties (RELCV in the S.E.)
25. Programs from the N.W. Regional Education Lab.: Higher Level Thinking Abilities; Facilitating Inquiry in the Classroom; Interaction Analysis; Questioning Strategies; Systematic and Objective Analysis of Instructional Skills; Interpersonal Decision Making; Cross-age Peer Help; Preparing Educational Training Consultants; Increasing Achievement Motivation (all for inservice training). Self-instructional systems: Basic Electricity; Advanced Mathematics; Physical Science; Space; Plastics; Speech.
26. Programs from McREL being developed: Social Studies Packets; simulated scientific investigations; Explorations in Biology.
27. Leadership development unit, with activities similar to a Job Fair and Junior Achievement.
28. Students work with preschool children in their homes.
29. High school students tutor elementary students.
30. Student interns placed in community agencies.* (Appalachian Advance, 1971).

J. 1. Student lounge pass for honor students instead of study hall.
2. Special interest day per month (or week, with a choice of topics; special interest choice one week a semester.)*

3. Exploratory overview programs.
4. Teachers' minigrants for innovations.
5. Educational community leader, to mobilize community resources, both human and material.*
6. Special learning center for juniors and seniors, and selected younger students.
7. Instructional design teams to develop self-instructional learning packets for different kinds of students. Include instructional specialist, human relations specialist, prescriber of activities and objectives, media specialists, and evaluator.
8. Inservice consortiums (collaboration between nearby districts).
9. Six year secondary school for utilization of specially trained staff and of range of materials.
10. Summer staffing (1/2 day for enrichment or independent study courses; 1/2 day for curriculum planning and development.)
11. Community school concept, extended for gifted children's needs.
12. Community scholarship program.*
13. Reduce the gap between the educational aspirations of the low SES student and the opportunity for legitimate means for achievement;
    a) Develop the idea of respectability of ALL work.
    b) Expand low cost Vo-Tech, community and junior college opportunities.
    c) Extend avocational interests.*
    d) Develop "relevant" teaching methods to reach those untouched by traditional methods; remediate through "relevancy", so that talent and giftedness will emerge among the cultural different or disadvantaged.*
    e) Avoid expected problems by de-emphasizing arbitrary and unenforceable rules which antagonize; judge students on other than superficial criteria (hair and dress); avoid labeling students (behavior problem, disadvantaged, according to racial stereotypes or cultural group.
14. Shared services concept, with psychological teams, special education consultants (including consultant for the gifted), subject specialists, central resources and media, business services, etc.

K. 1. Residential school for the disadvantaged gifted. (Lynn, 1968; Gold, 1970)

L. 1. After school, summer, and summer camp enrichment for creatively gifted disadvantaged children.* (Witt, 1971; Torrance, 1968)

M. 1. Summer programs for gifted children as part of a teacher-training program.* (Gowan, and others, 1969; Bruch, 1970)

N. 1. Summer residential schools for gifted high school students in Georgia and North Carolina.
2. Summer residential school for gifted high school students (with search for disadvantaged gifted students) sponsored by the Gifted Students Foundation, Inc. (1970)

O. 1. Specific training about the Gifted for Volunteers in Public Schools Program, Athens, Ga.,*

* Provisions which either involve, or could involve volunteer and community efforts.

Of the total of 29 provisions listed which may apply to volunteers for the gifted in rural areas, three instances are those with which the author has been directly associated. Such examples are concerned with training personnel for working with the gifted, for before a program can be established for the gifted, some background about the principles for working with these students should be available for those who will implement the program. Without an understanding of the needs of bright and talented children, educators or volunteers may design a program which only materializes as an administrative arrangement (scheduling, grouping, or provision of facilities) without application of the basic strategies for development of the productive thinking processes of the gifted. For optimal utilization of any of the programs listed, some training---preservice, inservice, or graduate coursework---should be involved.

Two of the training examples with which the author has been associated were those in which a summer laboratory school was established to train teachers and other school staff about gifted children. The first focussed upon creativity for the gifted (Gowan, and others, 1969), while the second exemplified not only creativity but also the involvement especially of outstanding students from disadvantaged populations (Bruch, 1970). The disadvantaged students were representative of both the rural black and the rural white cultures of Northeast Georgia; some of the white students were from the rural Appalachian culture.

Volunteers were an essential part of both training programs. The programs were not funded under special grants, but only through the cooperative efforts of the training institution, the local school systems, and the volunteer efforts and small contributions of the parents of the children in the programs. These parents assisted

in the operation of the laboratory schools in many supportive functions: secretarial services; administrative organization of parent group functions; purchasing of supplies; accounting; transportation (daily and for field trips); library services; volunteer aides in special subjects; arranging for outside speakers; guest presentations and workshops in their own areas of specialization; organization and responsibility for confidential files (by parents qualified to deal with confidential information); test scoring of creativity tests (coded); orientation meetings for all parents; public relations with parents, schools, community, and local and national press representatives, etc. The training programs could not have functioned, nor could the children have attended without high costs, without the assistance available from these parent volunteers.

The current example of the utilization of parent volunteers is one with which the author is now in process---Volunteers in Public Schools in Athens, Georgia. As a part of a total program for training parents to work within the public schools or to extend the opportunities available through the schools in the <u>community schools</u> concept, a series of five workshops has been set up for parents who which to work with gifted students. The workshops are non-credit, but are designed to stimulate the possible seeking of graduate or undergraduate credit by those involved in their possible return for more education in college in the future. The first three sessions have been completed, with two to follow in January, 1972 as preparation for the actual design of a program for gifted students which would be staffed primarily by the parent volunteers. These parents are themselves capable persons; many are wives of local university professors.

The content of the workshops deals with the major concepts and strategies in regard to processes appropriate for the gifted. Productive thinking is emphasized, and practiced in the workshop setting. After the basic structure has been introduced and processed actively by the volunteers to the depth possible in the brief series, the final session will deal with planning to fit the individual abilities of the volunteers to a program possible within that particular school setting.

An interesting aside is the fact that the volunteers themselves are enjoying the workshop experiences, and are feeling the release of their own potentials. One mother, who found that she had an outstanding score within her group on a sample test of creativity, exclaimed that she then felt more free to use her own creative potential, although she had doubted her abilities in this area previously.

Many of the items in the list of possible rural gifted programs may be of use to consider as to their applicability to other schools, or the ideas could be adapted for use. Throughout the literature the importance of involvement of parents and other community persons was reiterated. But, before an administrative arrangement is decided upon, the training of school staff and of potential volunteers is highly recommended. Without a reasonable understanding of the rationale for working with the gifted, and in particular the disadvantaged gifted, personnel in the programs often commit the error of simply applying to bright youngsters a distasteful dose of "more of the same". With training in exercising their own productive thinking processes, teachers and volunteers are anxious to release children to experience their own productive powers.

REFERENCES

Appalachian Advance, V. 1, 1966-'67; V. 2, 1968; V.3, 1968-'69; V. 4, V. 5, 1970-'71.

Bruch, C. B. A proposed rationale for the identification and development of the gifted disadvantaged. Gifted Children Newsletter, 1970a, 12 (2), 40-49.

Bruch, C. B. Challenge '70 - University of Georgia. Gifted Children Newsletter, 1970b, 13 (2), 12-16.

Bruch, C. B. Modification of procedures for identification of disadvantaged gifted. Gifted Child Quarterly, 1971 (in press).

Dallenbach, J. F. and Young, K. N. Special Education for the gifted through television. Duluth, Minn.: Report of Project No.. OE-3260, Grant No. OEG 3-7-703-260-4955 of the Educational Research and Development Council of N. E. Minn., 1969 (Mimeo).

Gifted Students Foundation, Inc. A summer program for academically gifted students. Address: 8609 N.W. Plaza Suite 33, Dallas, Texas, 1970 (brochure).

Gold, M. J. Death of a school for the gifted. Gifted Child Quarterly, 1970, 14(3), 174-179.

Gowan, J. C., Morrison, C., Pasternak, M., Groth, N., and Drake, M. New aspects in guiding the gifted in demonstration classes. Gifted Child Quarterly, 1969, 13(2), 103-112.

Heesacker, F. L. The small school can be a good school. NASSP Bulletin, 1970, 54(348), 1-9.

Kelly, E. J. Toward a comprehensive paradigm of special educational functions. Journal of Special Education, 1968, 2(3), 273-281.

Lynn, B. Disadvantaged gifted - A residential school. Gifted Child Quarterly, 1968, 12(1), 18-22.

Malone, J. E. The school the community built. NASSP Bulletin, 1970, 54(348), 39-49.

Mitchell, D. E. and Davison, G. A. Illinois Education, May 1970, 383-384.

Mitchell, W. B. Specialized programs for academically advanced students. NASSP Bulletin, 1970, 54(350), 94-99.

Plowman, P. D. What can be done for rural gifted children and youth? Gifted Child Quarterly, 1968, 12(3), 160-174.

Porter, R. M. Saturday seminars for the able and ambitious. NASSP Bulletin, 1970, 54(348), 26-38.

Pyner, R. M. Wayne community takes new approaches. NASSP Bulletin, 1970, 54(348), 10-20.

Torrance, E.P. Finding hidden talents among disadvantaged children. Gifted Child Quarterly, 1968, 12(3), 131-137.

Torrance, E.P. Broadening concepts of giftedness in the 70's. Gifted Child Quarterly, 1970, 14(4), 199-208.

Torrance, E.P. Are the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking biased against or in favor of "disadvantaged" groups? Gifted Child Quarterly, 1971, 15(2), 75-80.

Witt, G. The life enrichment activity program, Inc.: A continuing program for creative, disadvantaged children. Journal of Research and Development in Education, 1971, 4(3), 67-73.